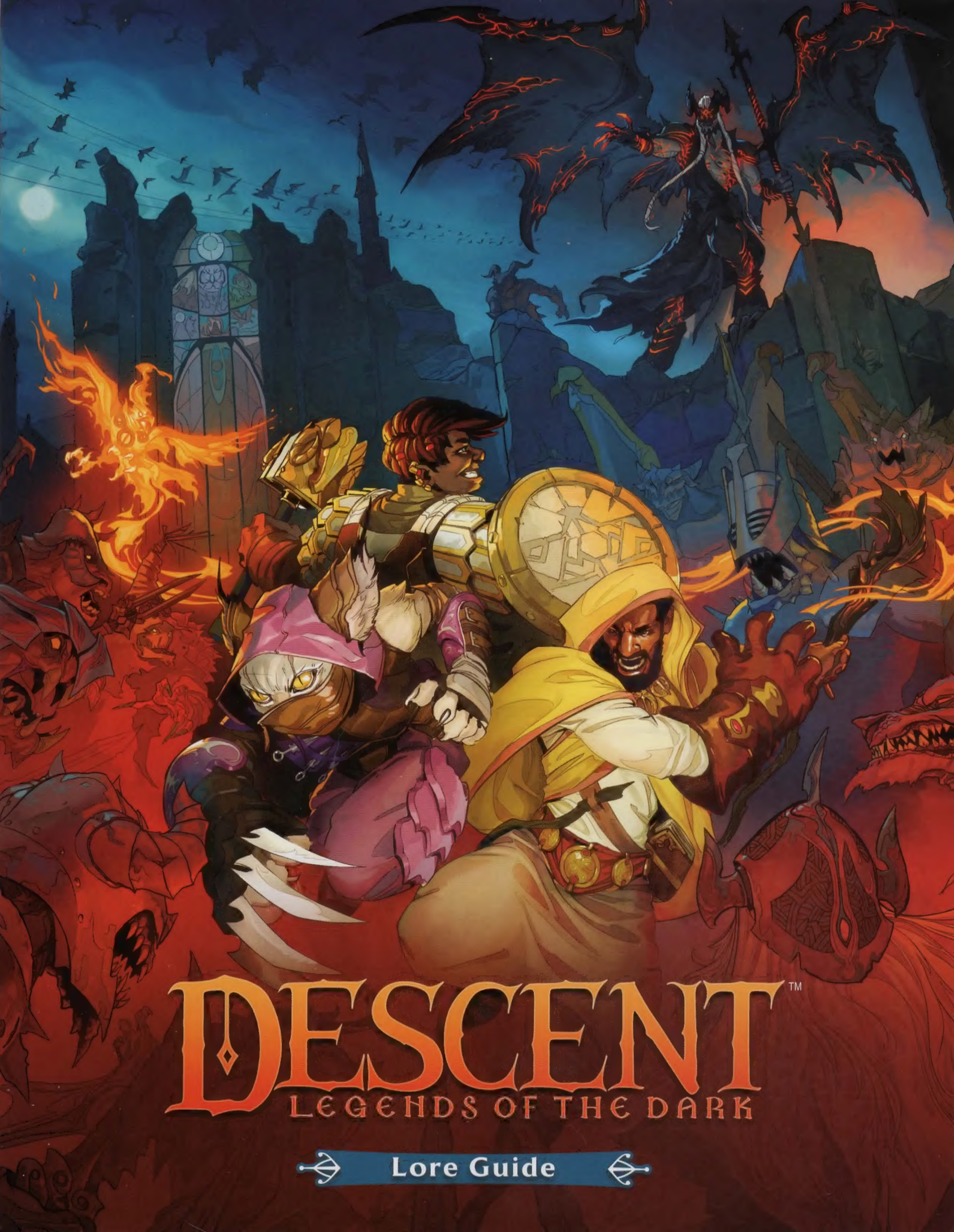

DESCENT™

LEGENDS OF THE DARK

Lore Guide

Terrinoth lies half in shadow, and night is falling. The realm's oldest enemy has returned, and already the baronies are splintering. One more disaster could mean a fatal blow to the kingdom's heart.

But there are a handful of unlikely heroes who strive against this evil. Born of their various fires, they fight for the survival of Forthyn, the northernmost barony of Terrinoth. In doing so, they unite together, and forge a legend that will change their world.

Terrinoth: Land of Wonder

Terrinoth is a land of great beauty and great danger. Monsters haunt the ruins of grand civilizations lost to time, guarding hoards of magnificent treasures. Feral dragons brood over clutches of eggs, undead lurk behind the veil of mists, and the demonic barbarians of the Uthuk stalk the wilds.

Humans, dwarves, orcs, and others from dozens of nations congregate in the Free Cities scattered across the realm. In these crowded streets, the common language is commerce, and the highest virtue is gold. Meanwhile, in the surrounding baronies, feudal lords and yeoman farmers protect their lands and still champion the nobility and honor of their long-dead King Daqan.

The Wider World

Beyond the borders of Terrinoth, the world is full of mystery and menace. The deep jungles of Zanaga hide slumbering gods. The golden sands of al-Kalim dance under the brilliant sun. The sea and tides of the Torue Albes carry bold adventurers to fortune or disaster. In the volcanic Molten Heath, dragons slumber atop their hoards of stolen riches. The orc tribes thrive in the perilous Broken Plains. Deep in the soaring Dunwarr Mountains, dwarves carve great monuments to their heroic ancestors. The green boughs of the Aymhelin stretch across nations, providing a home for all manner of magical creatures and the Latari elves. And from the demon-haunted Ru Darklands come the resurgent barbarian hordes of the Uthuk Y'llan.

The many tribes and nations of the world have long histories of war and peace. In times of great crisis, they may unite against a common foe—or opportunistically throw their armies behind a rising power. In times of relative peace, it seems no matter is so petty that it can't provoke a war. Sometimes, nations and tribes even fight against themselves, as their internal disagreements break out into open conflict.

The world has been mainly peaceful in recent decades...but that is changing, and swiftly.

The Three Darknesses

I: The Locust Horde

Over a thousand years ago, the nomadic tribes of the Loth K'har wandered the grassy Ru plains to the east of Terrinoth. They lived a quiet and unassuming existence, until a power-hungry shaman named Llovar Rutonu made a pact with demonic forces from beyond the mortal realm. He tricked his kin into tainting their bodies by consuming demon blood, and the resulting abominations soon corrupted or destroyed all of the other tribes of the Loth K'har.

In the K'hari tongue, they called Llovar's army the Uthuk Y'llan, "the Locust Swarm," so great were their numbers. To add to his hordes, Llovar found allies among the dragons, orcs, and undead. Soon, the Uthuk erupted from the east and ravaged the lands of Terrinoth, threatening to plunge the whole world into darkness.

Llovar's nephew Timmoran Lokander survived the destruction of the Loth K'har and fled to the lands of the south. Then, just as the war seemed lost, he returned from exile having mastered the mysteries of magic. Timmoran led a grand alliance that destroyed the Uthuk and set the world to rights. Great heroes such as Waiqar Sumarion and King Daqan of Terrinoth made their names in those battles, and the world has never known a grander alliance of justice and righteousness.

II: Waiqar the Betrayer

Timmoran created the Orb of the Sky, a massive crystal of pure magic, to preserve his mystical power for future generations. His old friend Waiqar Sumarion, now a baron of Terrinoth, opposed the plan and resolved to claim the Orb for himself. In desperation, Timmoran shattered the Orb and scattered its thousand shards across the world. Waiqar slew his friend in rage and vowed never to rest until he claimed every Shard of Timmoran for himself. Not even death would stand in the way of Waiqar the Undying completing his quest.

Transforming his army into a host of undead warriors, Waiqar plunged Terrinoth into its second era of darkness. For years, the Betrayer seeded necromantic death cults in the Free Cities and baronies, weakening Terrinoth from within until the vigilance of the barons waned. Then he led his armies on a methodical, brilliant campaign of conquest and pillage, ever seeking the Shards. Only the rise of Kellos and his cult of healing flames blunted the undead attack, and eventually Waiqar and his Deathborn Legion were driven back to the mist-cloaked lands of his cursed barony.

III: The Dragon Wars

The Shards of Timmoran were entrusted to nobles and royalty across the world, selected for their wisdom by Timmoran's apprentice. After generations of peace, the so-called Elder Kings began using the power of the Shards. With this magic, they raised great cities and monuments, brought wealth and prosperity to their subjects, and even reshaped the very face of their realms.

But this hubris drew the attention of dragons who coveted the Shards for themselves. From the volcanic crags of the Molten Heath they came—High Lord Margath, Zir the Black, Levirax, and many others. These ambitious and cunning dragonlords were among the most powerful of all dragonkind. Only the Dragon Rex, Shaarina, stood above them. The dragonlords bred dragon hybrids to fill the ranks of their armies, and they waged war upon every nation that dared to hold a Shard in its treasury. Dunwarr, Terrinoth, even the Aymhelin fell before their might. Everywhere they went, the dragonlords claimed the Shards—and countless other treasures—to add to their hoards.

Some among the dragonlords broke the Shards into smaller pieces and inscribed them with draconic runes that limited and focused their power to a single purpose. While only a gifted sorcerer could unlock the potential of a Shard of Timmoran, these runebound shards could be used by anyone. These the dragonlords gave to their followers, giving their armies access to potent magics.

A desperate alliance of all the free peoples—including, for the first time, the orc tribes—rallied against the dragonlords. But it was the intervention of the Dragon Rex that ultimately drove the dragons back into the Molten Heath, carrying the bulk of their stolen treasure with them.

Humans

The Barons of Daqan

After the death of King Daqan, there was no heir to assume Terrinoth's throne. Instead, the surviving barons of Daqan's Council agreed to rule the kingdom jointly. Every season, these co-rulers meet at the Citadel in Archaut, the ancient capital of Terrinoth. There, they discuss the important issues of the day and unite to face challenges that no single barony can address on their own.

The individual baronies are independent states in most respects. They have their own armies and their own laws. However, the Citadel is responsible for matters that affect all baronies, and each barony donates warriors and gold to protect and maintain the Citadel and the Council.

Marshals of the Citadel

Although the lords and guilds of Terrinoth have great freedom to create and enforce their own laws, there are still principles of justice and precedent that bind all citizens of Terrinoth. Referred to as the Common Law, this code ensures that even the lowliest peasant has a degree of freedom, and even the highest lord must act with integrity or suffer the consequences.

The Marshals of the Citadel are knights sworn to uphold the Common Law. After a grueling apprenticeship that teaches feats of arms and the laws of the land, Marshals are empowered to travel the length and breadth of the realm and bring justice wherever they go. While at times they must deliver their judgement with their war hammers or blades, more often they serve as neutral arbiters or traveling judges, resolving disputes in remote communities that have no permanent magistrate.

The Free Cities

Although most of the political power in Terrinoth is vested in the feudal lords, the enormous economic power of the Free Cities means even the Council cannot ignore their desires. While the eight Free Cities are not technically part of any barony, they are loyal to the Council and bound by its laws.

Each Free City has its own unique character. Frostgate, within the borders of the barony of Forthyn, is the spiritual and political hub of the northern clans. Forge is home to many dwarves and the best smiths in Terrinoth. And Greyhaven, home of the Universities, trains the best runemasters and wizards. But all are large, vibrant, and economic powerhouses compared to the surrounding rural baronies. As the merchant classes gain wealth and power in the Cities, their success strains the old traditions of feudal obligation.

Elves

Emorial and Latariana

When the elves still dwelled in the Empyrean, the foremost among them were Lord Emorial and Lady Latariana. In those days, the elves had dominion over light and air and were sustained by the very essence of their realm. But in time, Latariana began to desire more—she craved dominion over the spheres of life and dreams, powers which belonged only to the First.

Lord Emorial confronted the First and demanded the power that his wife craved. The First cast him out, and so he gathered his people and marched, intending to storm the home of the First and take their power by force. But the elves never reached their destination, instead finding themselves in the Firma Dracem, the mortal world.

Latariana, whose heart had been tempted to evil by shadowy forces within the Ynfernael, repented of her error. She wept eleven magical tears out of sorrow, which became gemstones still treasured by the elves today. In penance, she was borne up into the sky to become the first star—where her light stands as a guide and as a promise, that the elves may one day return to the Empyrean. Lord Emorial, for his part, divided his people up into eleven tribes, giving each chieftain one of Latariana's Tears, and descended into the Ynfernael to do battle with the darkness there.

The Latari Elves

The Latari draw their name from Latariana herself, and still dwell where the elves first entered the world. The Latari Elves have ever been foremost among the tribes.

From their home in the great forest of the Aymhelin, the Latari oppose the Ynfernael in all its guises. The *eolam* nobility dwell beneath the blue sky in the great clearing-city of Lithelin, while the majority of the *verdalam*, the common elves, live beneath the green boughs of the forest. Along with their forest allies, the elves vigilantly patrol their borders. Most rarely venture beyond the trees, but some brave and hardened souls bring the battle directly to the forces of evil, wherever they may be found.

The Shadow Tear

Malcorne, chieftain of the Malcari tribe, became convinced that the promised salvation of the elves was a lie. He used his tribe's Tear to rend open the barriers around the world, in an effort to bring war to the First again.

His Tear became tainted, however, and his tribe was brought low. The War of the Shadow Tear ushered demons and corruption into the world.

Dwarves

The Dwarven Exodus

Long ago the dwarves lived amongst the volcanoes of the Molten Heath, scraping a bare existence from the cinders and rocks and trying to avoid being eaten by the dragons. However, one dwarf, Helka the Bold, braved the wrath of the dragonlords and stole the secrets of their magical runes. The runic script allowed the dwarves to build a civilization. But the dragons were jealous and vindictive, and waged war upon the dwarves. The dragonlords drove the dwarves from the Molten Heath and into the Dunwarr mountains on Terrinoth's northern border. There they built a great kingdom beneath the peaks.

The Dunwarr dwarves believed they were safe from the draconic scourge in their mountain fastness. However, the wrath of the Dragonlords fell upon them during the Third Darkness. Many dwarven cities were razed, and the line of their rulers, the Deeplords, was extinguished forever, before the dragon armies finally relented.

The Guilds of Dunwarr

The Guilds of Dunwarr have become the center of political power for the mountain realm since the Dragon Wars. Each guild represents the artisans and masters of a single profession essential for dwarven society, and so each of the ten recognized guilds is awarded an equal vote in choosing the next king or queen of the dwarves. The guilds of the masons, miners, artificers, smiths, and brewers represent the bulk of the crafters and laborers of Dunwarr, while the Guilds of warriors, rangers, explorers, merchants, and runescribes focus on more specialized crafts and pursuits. Because only ten guilds are permitted by law, other would-be powers such as the Alchemist's League are constantly struggling to gain in prestige and significance, hoping to one day supplant an existing guild and join the ranks of the ten.

Each guild is jealous of its knowledge and power. They do not share secrets freely, and membership is extended only to those who earn the trust of the guild masters.

Forge

The Free City of Forge was first settled by dwarves during the great exodus. Initially a shrine called Yrthwright's Forge, the city served as a destination for dwarven pilgrims who wished to honor the "gift" of draconic runes. During the Dragon Wars, the city was captured by the dragons before being liberated by the human noble, Lady Ysbet. Ever since, it has been a Free City of Terrinoth, with a mixed human and dwarven population. In a reflection of Dunwarr society, Forge has its own guilds that maintain close informal ties with the great Guilds of their mountain cousins.

Catfolk

As their name would suggest, catfolk are feline humanoids with catlike eyes and features. Their clawed hands and feet make them excellent climbers. And their enhanced senses of smell and hearing, as well as eyes that can see in the dark, allow them to be prodigious hunters.

The only catfolk commonly found in Terrinoth are the Hyrrinx, whose smaller stature and tufted ears resemble the lynx of the northern forests of Forthyn. Hyrrinx communities are found in remote, hard-to-reach areas, in the depths of forests or mountain valleys. Because catfolk consume significant amounts of meat to survive, the Hyrrinx run short of food at least once a generation. When this happens, their custom is to exile unmarried adults or those the community deems a burden. These exiles, called Rythkin, find their own way in the world, often dwelling with humans. Some Rythkin seek their fortunes, hoping to buy their way back into a Hyrrinx community, or found a new settlement with other exiles. But many never go home again, living permanently among the baronies and Free Cities.

Dragon Hybrids

Dragon hybrids were created by the Dragonlords during the Dragon Wars to serve as soldiers in their armies. They vary widely in appearance, but all have some resemblance to their dragon ancestors. Some demonstrate draconic gifts as well, whether it's the ability to fly or a breath like a furnace. They all appear to have long lifespans, and some of the first-born hybrids from the Dragon Wars are still alive eight hundred years later.

Because of their considerable physical gifts, dragon hybrids often make a living as mercenaries, warriors, or even bandits. But thanks to their long lifespans, they can easily learn any trade. That same lifespan, however, isolates them from short-lived humans and other peoples.

It's believed that Dragonlord Valyndra was the first to create dragon hybrids, and she is still sometimes referred to as the "Great Mother." Other Dragonlords have also learned the art, including Levirax, Gehennor, and the other Dragonlords who fought in the Dragon Wars. The ability to create new hybrids is reserved for the Dragonlords alone—hybrids cannot have children. Perhaps this is why the hybrids have no cities or nations of their own. If there is a hybrid homeland, it is the Molten Heath, where large numbers of hybrids serve various factions of the Dragonlords, often organized along military lines.

FORTHYN
Dunwarr Mountains
Thelgrim
Woods of Woe
Blind Muir Forest
Fallowhearth
Frostgate
Highmont
Howling Giant Hills
Shadow Peaks